293 198 The White hears only the difference in tempo, nothing more. The Negro miles away understands what is being telephoned.

The lokole language consists chiefly of metaphors and is thus not intelligible to any White in the whole of the Congo. The Negroes are proud of their invention and also pleased that the White, who otherwise can do everything, is not able to understand their lokole.

Every man has his own name (nkombo) on the lokole with which he makes himself known. Because such a name often covers several lines of script, chiefly expressed in metaphors giving facts of the public life of the Negro concerned, it would be a physical impossibility for a White to master the lokole language in the way a Negro does. Actually, not even all Negroes understand the art of beating the lokole.

[962] The women have a general name; beating the lokole is only for the men, and no woman understands the art. The women understand what is being broadcast when the lokole is beaten, but they cannot beat it themselves. Moreover, they would be ashamed to attempt it; this is no task for a woman, and they would be laughed at. The lokole name, or nkombo, of the woman is as follows:

Bali la tolombo besalaki lisala, besalaki tombokoko, tond' al' isusu, befomba eka lisala.

"Women in numbers, worked the garden, prepared much to eat, consisting of bananas, to eat out of the garden."

A White, personally, has no nkombo of his own on the lokole, but to announce the arrival of a White in a village, the following is spread around far and wide:

Lolema ja lifeka feka, esongo etenaka nkola.

"The bat flies about everywhere, the pin wounds the nails of the feet."

With "the bat flies about everywhere" is to be understood the government agent who goes from village to village collecting the taxes. "The pin wounds the nails of the feet" means that, just as the Negroes go on the warpath with sharp pointed sticks dipped in poison to wound the enemies' feet, the government agent is always on his rounds with his rifle, ready for the fray.

[724]

The nkombo of the Catholic missionary is as follows: [102]

(1) Bamele nsele ba nkanga; (2) bofala boki ndaki lisako nda lokombo; (3) etafe bolo; (4) benanga bekendaka la mperu.

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must go to the *mukolo* for their fight, this being the location of the known belonging to the *nkumu*. The penalty for breaking this law is a fine, and if no fine were forthcoming hanging used to be the alternative. If a quarrel arises elsewhere and one party wishes to avoid fighting, he may retire to the *mugo* and thus be safe. No trees in the *mugo* may be climbed. There are, however, privileged classes exempt from all such rules, and these embrace a good many people. Thus, the mother of twins, twins, Bawa, *mwari*, and all members of the *mukolo* and *shopo* are exempt from the laws of the *mugo*. If any of these commit acts which are illegal for those coming under the law, they are not held guilty, but their actions will not be condoned; they will be considered breaches of good conduct, and will be dealt with informally; the parties will be quietly reprimanded, and adjured to observe the proprieties of conduct. For outsiders breaking the laws of the *mugo*, what corresponds to a warrant is necessary. It is necessary to catch the culprit in the act and hale him before the *nkumu*. The *nkumu* himself cannot do this, nor can any of the *shopo*; it must be done by one of the *mukolo*, and so if the *nkumu* sees someone infringing the law he will try to get one of the *mukolo* on the spot in a hurry in order to catch the offender.

In war,[1] it is the *mukwai a nkumu* who is most active in preparations, but the *nkumu* will accompany his party to battle, keeping well in the rear, and surrounded by good fighters. He does not wear his *mwenda* but puts on the informal hat. If an *nkumu* were captured, he would never be tortured or killed as were other prisoners, unless he specifically sought such a fate. He could be ransomed, and his capture would beseech him to let his people ransom him, but in many cases an *nkumu* would invite death rather than endure the shame of being yielded up as a prisoner of war.

An *nkumu* is always addressed by a double clap of the hands, and will not reply to anyone rude enough to speak to him first. In answer to the clap he replies with a word of wisdom expressed in an aphorism or proverb. Such a reply, however, is common to all elders, who have their favourite aphorisms ready for any who pay them special honour. Anything the *nkumu* says must be answered not by the customary *ndo kuita* (even sir) which ordinary people use, but with the special word, *hinga*, which is reserved exclusively for replying to an *nkumu*, and means the same thing.

When the hour of death approaches, an *nkumu* is attended by his Bawa. It is a rule that he must not die a natural death, and near the end, while he is still conscious and can still speak, all 'free men' clear out and leave the Bawa pygmies to their task of tying the *nkumu* very tightly with the famous yam vines known as *mwikki*. Often this occurs lasting in the sitting posture, known as *tlima*, is sufficient to finish the *nkumu* off, but sometimes the work is expedited by twisting his neck.[2] Then it is announced that he is dead, *mukilwa*, this being in contradistinction to the customary phrase *mkumu mukolo* used of the death of ordinary people. While the latter means

[1] Owing to the lack of tribal cohesion, warfare was not on any considerable scale. The method of warfare consisted in sending groups of young men to fight first, the elders only joining in when one side began to get the worst of the fray. Victors and vanquished in such fights were designated 'husband' and 'wife' respectively, and members of the one group were free to come and go in the villages of the other, and even to help themselves to food. In future wars 'husband' and 'wife' were supposed to combine against their common foes.

[2] Besides *nkumu*, elderly and rich men, fathers and mothers of twins, and twins are buried in the *tlima* or sitting posture, in contradistinction to the *mwenga* position which is the recumbent one used for ordinary people and slaves.